

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MORES

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give us more information about the mores than historical records. It is very difficult to construct from the Old Testament a description of the mores of the Jews before the captivity. It is also very difficult to make a complete and accurate picture of the mores of the English colonies in North America in the seventeenth century. The mores are not recorded for the same reason that meals, going to bed, sunrise, etc., are not recorded, unless the regular course of things is broken.

83. Inertia and rigidity of the mores. We see that we must conceive of the mores as a vast system of usages, covering the whole of life, and serving all its interests ; also containing in themselves their own justification by tradition and use and wont, and approved by mystic sanctions until, by rational reflection, they develop their own philosophical and ethical generalizations, which are elevated into " principles " of truth and right. They coerce and restrict the newborn generation. They do not stimulate to thought, but the contrary. The thinking is already done and is embodied in the mores. They never contain any provision for their own amendment. They are not questions, but answers, to the problem of life. They present themselves as final and unchangeable, because they present answers which are offered as "the truth." No world philosophy, until the modern scientific world philosophy, and that only within a generation or two, has ever presented itself as perhaps transitory, certainly incomplete, and liable to be set aside to-morrow by more knowledge. No popular world philosophy or life policy ever can present itself in that light. It would cost too great a mental strain. All the

groups whose mores we consider far inferior to
our own are
quite as well satisfied with theirs as we are with
ours. The
goodness or badness of mores consists entirely in
their adjust-
ment to the life conditions and the interests of
the time and
place (sec. 65). Therefore it is a sign of ease and
welfare when
no thought is given to the mores, but all cooperate
in them
instinctively. The nations of southeastern Asia show
us the per-
sistency of the mores, when the element of stability
and rigidity
in them becomes predominant. Ghost fear and
ancestor worship
tend to establish the persistency of the mores
by dogmatic